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Statement by Ambassador Vernon A. Walters, United States Representative to the 40th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, in Plenary, on Item 28, the Situation in Afghanistan, November 12, 1985

Mr. President, for almost six years now, Soviet troops in Afghanistan have waged a relentless war against everything Afghan. Nothing has been spared: not women or children; not animals or crops; not dwellings, mosques, schools or hospitals; not even Afghan history or culture...religion...tradition.

An ancient land caught in a modern war, Afghanistan is being subjected daily to the full force of Soviet modern-day weaponry and technology. Reports of deadly chemical weapons use continue to surface. Never in its long tumultuous history of resisting marauding armies and foreign invaders has Afghanistan faced as remorseless and heartless an enemy.

Using a combination of military terror on the one hand and psychological manipulation in the form of re-education and indoctrination efforts on the other, the Soviet forces have tried for six years -- longer than the duration of the Second World War -- to break the Afghan spirit. We are here today to witness that they have failed.

Despite all efforts to impose a virtual black-out on news of the war, eye-witness reports of inconceivable, heinous crimes testify to Soviet callousness in achieving their ultimate goal -- creation of a docile, client state. Unable to pacify or control the countryside, the Soviets -- with clinical precision -- have, in some areas, resorted to tactics aimed at depopulating the land. Over three and one half million refugees -- more than the population of many members of this organization and one fourth of Afghanistan's pre-war population -- have fled the country. Migratory genocide is how one historian has described it. High altitude saturation bombings, the willful destruction of crops and livestock, widespread use of anti-personnel mines, civilian reprisals and gruesome violations of fundamental human rights and decency have been and continue to be perpetrated against the Afghan civilian population. These are not tall tales or propaganda but rather a genuine human tragedy. The UN Commission on Human Rights has expressed "its profound concern at

the grave and massive human rights violations in Afghanistan," and this aspect of the Afghan tragedy will be considered by the General Assembly later in this session.

But this is not all. In addition to strong-arm tactics aimed at physically crushing the Afghan spirit of resistance, the Soviets have embarked on a long-term effort to reshape this spirit into a docile, pliable mold. In a word, they wish to Sovietize it. How else can one explain the revision of Afghan school curricula in which Islamic teaching is replaced by dialectic materialism and Marxist-Leninist ideology? How else to explain the introduction of "new" history textbooks rewritten by Soviet scholars? How to explain the replacement of Afghan professors with those from Communist countries who now comprise over 60% of Kabul University's faculty? This effort to Sovietize the younger generation of Afghans explains why children as young as five and six years old are separated from their families for up to ten years during which they are indoctrinated in Communism and the Soviet way of life. Since 1979, an estimated 40,000 Afghan students have been sent to the Soviet Union. These efforts to incorporate and absorb the Afghan people augur ill for an early solution to the war in Afghanistan.

There are currently between 118,000 and 120,000 Soviet troops in Afghanistan and an additional 30,000 poised on the Soviet side of the border. The Soviets continue to escalate their military effort. They continue to upgrade their firepower. They continue to assume a greater direct role in intensified fighting, relying increasingly on dreaded helicopter gunships, airborne troops and surprise search and destroy operations. Their strategy is a long-term one, aimed at wearing down the resistance of and eroding international support for the mujahidin.

Despite their military offensives, their brutal scorched earth tactics and their various subversive strategies, the Soviets are no closer today to achieving their objectives than they were on December 27, 1979 when their invading troops murdered President Hafizullah Amin and installed in his place Babrak Karmal. Hostility and active opposition to the Karmal regime now encompass the entire country. The Soviets cannot operate anywhere in the countryside without danger of attack. Even in Kabul, their most heavily guarded garrisons and airbases have been attacked. Unable to find qualified Afghan technocrats who are willing to participate in this puppet government, the Soviets have been forced to abandon the pretense that they are merely advising the Babrak Karmal regime and now either directly make, or are deeply involved in, every major political, military or social policy decision of the regime. The Kabul regime's army -- rent by disloyalty, desertions, defections, disillusionment and indiscipline -- has shrunk to less than half its pre-invasion strength of 90,000.

What the Soviet Union has failed to realize -- and of course refuses to acknowledge -- is that the will of a people united in a national liberation struggle cannot be broken by force of arms. Nowhere in the world is this will stronger or more generalized than in Afghanistan. Nowhere is the simple moral issue of what is right and what is criminally wrong more starkly defined. On the

battlefield, the Afghan resistance is better organized, better trained and more effective militarily than ever before. In the Panjsher Valley; in Konar, in Paktia and Paktika, in Herat -- in short, throughout the country -- Afghan partisans have given a brilliant account of themselves against Soviet legions equipped with a terrifying array of the most modern instruments of war. Mujahidin have fought in other times and in other places. In this conflict, the Afghan mujahidin are proving once more that their defense of their faith and country and their desire for freedom are indomitable.

Like a number of my colleagues in this body, I was honored to be able to hear first hand of the struggle in Afghanistan -- from the spokesmen of the Afghan resistance alliance who visited here as a delegation last month. The leader of this delegation and his alliance colleagues not only lead a military struggle against a foreign oppressor but also translate into political terms the will of the Afghan people for freedom. As a former soldier, I know when I am in the presence of courage and resolve. The resistance is alive and well. The morale and determination of its members to continue to fight are unshaken.

It has been said that "In the moral world, there is nothing impossible if we can bring a thorough will to it. Man can do everything with himself, but he must not attempt to do too much with others." Nowhere is this more evident than in Afghanistan. The Soviets will never succeed in imposing their will on the Afghans. They will not succeed in breaking the Afghan national will to fight for their freedom and their way of life. The Afghans will never acquiesce in what amounts to their own destruction as a people and as a nation.

But how long can the world stand by and let this carnage continue? The toll in human lives -- not to mention the destruction of homes, crops and the fragile agricultural infrastructure -- is staggering. If both sides remain true to their objectives, the only possible outcome is continued death and destruction. President Reagan, in his October 24 speech to this Assembly stated: "There is no purpose more noble than for us to sustain and celebrate life in a turbulent world...life, and the preservation of freedom to live it in dignity, is what we are on this earth to do." This body, conceived from the ashes of one war of liberation and dedicated to the preservation of peace, has a moral duty to end this war and the agony of the Afghan people.

The solution to the Afghan tragedy is not a military one. The only lasting solution is a negotiated political settlement that encompasses the four elements in the resolution to be voted on by this body. These are: the immediate withdrawal of foreign troops; restoration of Afghanistan's independent and nonaligned status; self-determination for the Afghan people; and the creation of the necessary conditions which would enable the Afghan refugees to return voluntarily and with honor to their homes.

On six previous occasions, this Assembly has overwhelmingly voted for a resolution urging a political solution to the situation in Afghanistan. Yet the war and the devastation continue.

President Reagan's regional initiative, spelled out in his October 24 speech, was meant to spur diplomatic efforts to solve the Afghan tragedy. It is not enough for us to heap praise on the Afghans for their brave exploits against daunting odds. It is not enough to support the Afghan struggle passively. No country -- large or small -- can be indifferent to the fate of the Afghans. No country that truly loves freedom can vote against this resolution. It provides the basis for a just and viable settlement. It provides the means to stop the Afghan suffering.

The United States is prepared to guarantee a comprehensive and balanced settlement in Afghanistan, consistent with the General Assembly's resolutions and predicated on a complete withdrawal of Soviet forces in a fixed and reasonable length of time. We support and applaud the efforts of the Secretary-General and his Special Representative to find a just and viable settlement that protects the legitimate security interests of all parties. Considerable progress has been made toward this end. The key outstanding issue remains the establishment of a timetable for the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan. Without agreement on withdrawal, no solution is possible, and no guarantees can be given. Instead, the carnage and destruction will continue.

We hope that adoption of this resolution will serve as renewed evidence of the international community's steadfast commitment to a negotiated settlement and will stimulate prompt resolution of this vital issue. This is the way to offer the Afghans another chance to live in peace and freedom. Thank you, Mr. President.

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